

THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL

And with tears of blood he cleansed
the hand,,
The hand that held the steel:
For only blood can wipe out blood,
And only tears can heal:
And the crimson stain that was of
Cain
Became Christ's snow-white seal.

VI

IN Reading gaol by Reading town
There is a pit of
shame,
And in it lies a
wretched man
Eaten by teeth of flame,
In a burning winding-sheet
he lies,
And his grave has got no name.

And there, till Christ call forth the
In silence let him lie:
No need to waste the foolish tear,
Or heave the windy sigh:
The man had killed the thing
he loved,
And so he had to die.

And all men kill the thing they love.,
By all let this be
heard,
Some do it with a
bitter look,
Some with a nattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!